

Wetland Habitat Conditions – Fall 2008

(Updated Oct. 27, 2008)

Important Note: In 2008, the Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Bureau realigned its wildlife management unit boundaries to improve efficiency and adjust land-management workloads. Most of the new wildlife management units were also given new names. Please refer to the revised Wildlife Management Unit map to determine the Wildlife Unit responsible for the area or areas for which you want information.

BLACK HAWK WILDLIFE UNIT

Mike Mahn, Wildlife Biologist

Sac County

Black Hawk Wildlife Area: Last fall, this spring and early summer, heavy rains caused extremely high water levels. These high water conditions prevented the completion of last years scheduled FEMA repairs to the dikes. As a result, the repairs are currently being made to the dikes. To accomplish these repairs, the water has been drained from the wetlands. Some areas of sheet water remain but waterfowl hunting will be very limited as a result. If possible, some water may be added at a later date to provide additional sheet water, but until the vegetation is well established on the newly repaired dikes, the water levels must be held very low to prevent dike erosion.

Tomahawk Marsh: Water levels are good but dense vegetation continues to cover most of the area with some open pockets starting to appear. The pool west of the railroad structure has good water levels but is primarily devoid of vegetation except for the edges.

Kiowa Marsh: The water level is at or near crest. The main pool is accessible using boats, but some problems with submergent vegetation may be encountered. The habitat conditions are generally good, but the main pool is devoid of most emergent vegetation except for the south end.

Burrow's Pond: Water levels are below crest but adequate water for small boats. Habitat conditions are generally good. Dense submergent vegetation will make boating with motors somewhat difficult.

Pocahontas County

Sunken Grove: Adequate water levels on the west side should allow general boat access. Habitat conditions are good. We are continuing to loose some of the emergent vegetation on the main pools. The east pool will be accessible with shallow-drafting boats.

Shimon Marsh: This area currently has almost no water as a result of efforts to revegetate the marsh this past summer. Stop logs were replaced in the water control structure in July, but due to the lack of precipitation this past summer, there is very little water in the marsh. If adequate rainfall does occur this fall, the area should start to refill.

Lizard Lake: This area has adequate water levels, however this area lacks emergent vegetation.

Calhoun County

South Twin Lake: Water levels are at crest. Habitat conditions are poor with only a narrow band of vegetation along the edge.

Carroll County

Artesian Lake: The water level is at pool elevation and the habitat conditions are excellent. This area should be especially attractive to ducks because moist soil plants have established over the summer and are now flooded.

CLEAR LAKE WILDLIFE UNIT

Greg Hanson, Wildlife Biologist

Rice Lake: The water level is about 4 inches below crest. There is very little shoreline vegetation on the main lake and little submergent vegetation. The Joice Slough, southeast of the main lake, is about 10 inches below crest and submergent vegetation is very dense.

Elk Creek: Pool A is about 2.5 feet below normal crest and is fringed with vegetation, although most of this fringe is currently dry. The stop logs have been replaced in the control structure but the water level is rising slowly due to the lack of precipitation. Pool B is at crest, but is predominantly open water with some willows and arrowhead. Pool B was held at crest level this year to kill the canary grass that was beginning to take over the refuged portion of the pool. Pool C is about 0.5 feet below crest. It was drawn down this summer to encourage moist soil plant growth, but the lateness of the drawdown delayed refilling this pool.

Harmon Lake: The water level is 8-10 inches low. There is a little less emergent vegetation than last year, but a lot of submergent vegetation.

Myre Slough: The water level is about 8 inches below normal crest. The pump has been running for 5 weeks and the water level is rising slowly. Vegetation is sparser than last year, but there is a good amount of submergent vegetation, which will attract ducks but make boating with a motor somewhat difficult.

Meredith Marsh: The west pool on this complex is nearly dry. The east pool has fair water, although lower than last year.

Crystal Hills and Gladfelter WPAs: Wetlands are near crest of slightly below crest. Good stands of submergent vegetation developed in some ponds, which should make them attractive to migrating ducks.

Eagle Lake: The water level is at crest, but a fair amount of the vegetation is floating due the high water levels in June. This may create some challenges in regards to boat access from the ramp.

East Twin Lake: The water level is 8-10 inches low. The main pool has a fair amount of floating vegetation, which could impede boat access. The east pool is heavily vegetated, but water is low.

Ventura Marsh: The water level in Ventura Marsh is just above crest, due to the water being returned through the marsh from the Clear Lake dredging operation. High water this past June uprooted some large mats of cattails and they now float back and forth across the marsh depending upon the wind direction and speed. The boat ramp has been blocked at times by floating mats of cattails, but these usually can be moved to allow access to the open water.

Union Hills: Water levels are variable on the wetlands on this waterfowl production area. Most wetlands, however, are shallower than normal and mud flats were showing on a few. The shallow water should be attractive to early migrating ducks.

Lower Morse Lake Wetland Complex: Water levels are variable on the wetlands in this complex, but all are below normal crest elevations. Mud flats are beginning to show on some of the smaller basins. The large wetland a mile east-northeast of Lake Cornelia has sufficient water to float a boat. Although water levels are lower than desirable, the shallow water has been very attractive to migrating teal.

Elm Lake: The water level at Elm Lake is just below crest but there is almost no emergent marsh vegetation except along the shore line.

Big Wall Lake: Due to the lack of precipitation in July and August, the water level in Big Wall Lake is similar to what it was last year, which was too shallow for anything other than small, shallow-draft duck boats or canoes. The area is heavily vegetated, but there are some open holes in the middle of the marsh. A hard freeze will kill most of the arrowhead and will make the area appear much more open by the second duck opener, which should make it more attractive to migrating ducks. Additional precipitation is needed this fall to bring the water level up to the desired level.

CEDAR-WAPSI WILDLIFE UNIT

Doug Chafa and Doug Janke, Wildlife Biologists

Sweet Marsh: The road in to the Plum Creek dam on the Sweet Marsh area will be closed due to flood damages. Access to the reservoir will be limited to walk-in or small boats that can be carried a short distance. The road will be open to the segment C parking area and boat ramp. Access to Martin's Lake and segment A in the SE part of Sweet Marsh are in good shape. Smart weed and millet are abundant in segment C and the reservoir, and present in segment A in small amounts. Hunters will notice additional disturbance in segment C where canary grass has been

tilled to allow for additional moist soil plant management in future years. Water levels are rising steadily and are on target to be similar to past years for the opener.

Leopold Area: The Leopold Area will have limited opportunities to offer hunters. Few of the wetlands have huntable water at this time; most of the basins are completely dry. Additional basins have been constructed on the east side, north of the highway, and they may provide some goose hunting opportunities this fall.

Big Marsh: Big Marsh began filling on September 8th. Filling was delayed by dike repairs and silt removal. The water level is rising nicely, but will be low for the first season. The goal is to have the water near the same level as last year's opener. There will not be much water in the middle pool so that the other two pools will have adequate water for boats. The water levels will be back to normal for the second season. Vegetation is very tall and smartweed production is good. When water levels are near normal, the marsh should be very attractive to migrating ducks.

GRAND RIVER WILDLIFE UNIT

Chad Paup, Wildlife Biologist

Ponds and lakes in the Grand River Unit generally have good water levels, but waterfowl habitat along the shores is generally poor due to the high water levels this past summer.

Lake Icaria: The Zimmerman Pool wetland at Lake Icaria has poor habitat conditions because of flooding this past summer.

Mitchell Marsh in Union County and **Simmons Wetland** in Taylor County have poor habitat conditions as a result of flooding this past summer.

GREAT LAKES WILDLIFE UNIT

Chris LaRue, Wildlife Biologist

Most traditional sloughs and larger wetlands have adequate water for waterfowl hunting opportunities. However, the continued dry conditions across the region have left many small and even a few larger marshes dry at this time. Existing water conditions for area wetland complexes are listed below. Any additional rainfall, however, could quickly change habitat conditions.

Welch Lake Complex: Excellent walk-in area with adequate water on many of the larger wetlands. Welch Lake itself can be accessed by boat.

Kettleson Hogsback Complex: West Hottes has very good water for small to moderately large duck boats. Larger marshes at this point are in fair to good condition for the duck opener.

Grover Lake: The Iowa portion is in excellent condition and has good water for boat access.

Spring Run: The larger traditional marshes will have good water for the duck opener. There are several good locations for boat access including Lily Lake, Pleasant Lake, Spring Lake, and Prairie Lake.

Dugout Creek: Has good water for boat access and walk-in hunting.

Christopherson Slough: This area was in drawdown for re-vegetation in 2008. Boards were replaced in July, however the lack of rain has left the marsh dry at this time. Walk-in hunting is possible as some of the larger wetlands still have good water for duck hunting.

Little Swan Lake: The lake and west bay have good water for the duck opener and boat access.

Garlock Slough: Has good water for walk-in hunting opportunities.

Jemmerson Slough: The north and east pools are dry due to a planned drawn down for re-vegetation as part of a critical water quality project in the Iowa Great Lakes Watershed. The larger marshes to the north are in good condition and will provide good opportunities for walk-in hunting. The west pool should have good water, with possibly enough water for boat access pending progress on the construction of the new water control structure. Jemmerson Slough is slated to become a waterfowl refuge in 2009, but will remain open to hunting throughout the 2008 season.

Horseshoe Lake WMA: Located just northwest of Jemmerson Slough, Horseshoe Lake has good water for hunting and boat access.

Yager Slough: This marsh is dry.

Sidel Marsh: The marsh is dry.

Diamond Lake: The main lake was drawn down this summer to re-vegetate it and improve water quality. Many of the marshes in this wetland complex are dry at this time, a few of the larger marshes having adequate water for walk-in hunting.

Hales Slough: Has good water for boat access and duck hunting.

Rush Lake (Osceola County): Rush Lake is lower than normal at this time. Water should be adequate, however, for boat access and walk-in hunting.

IOWA RIVER WILDLIFE UNIT

Tim Thompson, Wildlife Biologist

Hawkeye Wildlife Area (Johnson County): Coralville Reservoir and the Iowa River had major flooding in spring and summer. Water levels on the reservoir finally returned to the summer pool of 683.3 in mid-August. Vegetation has greened up but is short. Water levels are being raised for the second duck opener and should be two foot higher than the early season opener. An addition foot of water will be obtained during the first week of November completing the fall raise to 686.4 msl. Many submerged willows did survive and have leafed-out to provide hiding cover for hunters. Walk-in hunters may have better marsh conditions using the smaller marshes scattered throughout the Hawkeye Area. The flooding did damage some dikes and control structures and repairs still need to be made. The control structures at Beaver Pools and Plum Creek have been removed and we are anticipating the new structures will be installed the week of October 20th; rain has prevented this work from being done earlier. Boat hunters can now use either the new Babcock boat ramp (off of Swan Lake Road) installed in 2007 or the Greencastle Road North boat ramp completed this October. Both of these are excellent, cement boat ramps providing access to the Iowa River and Coralville Reservoir.

Swan Lake (Johnson County): Vegetation and water levels are providing good hemi-marsh conditions, but muskrats are rapidly eating and removing vegetation.

Dudgeon Lake (Benton County): Major flooding on the Cedar River has caused some holes in the dikes. Water levels on O'Brien Pond are up due to rains. Some repairs are needed before the full fall pool levels can be achieved. There are holes in the spillways on both Upper Detricks and Sanders Pond. Depending on rain, the pools west of O'Briens Pond may be lower than normal.

Otter Creek: Segment 1 is currently drawn down to raise the dike 2 feet and other repairs. This work was delayed because of flooding and untimely rains. After the work is completed, we will add some water to the segment for the remainder of the waterfowl season. Fall pool, however, will not be achieved so the new dirt work is protected from erosion this season. Segment 1 will still provide excellent waterfowl and hunting habitat for those who choose to walk in or use small boats. Segments 7, 6, 4, 4a, and 2 have excellent waterfowl habitat conditions and water levels. Boats will be able to access segments 6 and 7 and find plenty of flooded smartweed to hunt in. Refuge segments 3 and 5 have excellent conditions and food availability to hold large numbers of birds this fall.

Hendrickson Marsh: Water levels at Hendrickson Marsh are too low for boat access but will provide excellent conditions for walk-in hunters. The area has large patches of flooded smartweed and flooded willows for cover. It should hold good numbers of waterfowl this season.

MAQUOKETA WILDLIFE UNIT

Jeff Glaw, Wildlife Biologist

Green Island: The Green Island area was inundated most of the summer, which resulted in some changes in plant species on the area. The flooding reduced the amount of river bulrush that

grew, but favored the growth of more arrowhead than normal. Hunters should expect a lot of open water once this vegetation dies off. There is a fair amount of smartweed in the public hunting segments as well. Flooding in the refuge prevented corn planting this year, but moist soil plants developed along with some, japanese millet and winter wheat that was planted. There is a levee break in the Blake's Lake pool that should be repaired in November. This break, however, should not substantially affect water holding capabilities in the segment. Water conditions should be near normal for 1st season; pumping started on Sept. 9.

Princeton: Water topped the levees this year, but caused minimal damage. We were able to draw down the water to get some moist soil plant growth. Hunters should expect to see a lot of open water once the plants die back. Flooding did not allow crop planting in the refuge this year but we were able to plant small food plots and seed some millet as the water dropped. Water should be near normal for 1st season; pumping started on Sept. 8.

Goose Lake: River bulrush and cattail dominate the open water segments at Goose Lake this year. Last year, muskrats came in and consumed some vegetation in the north segments, creating some nice holes. Some timely rains have helped bring water levels up to crest.

Muskrat Slough: Muskrat Slough has a good mix of vegetation and open water this year. Some timely rains have helped bring the water level up to crest. Muskrat Slough is a good waterfowl area for small boats, kayaks, canoes, or walk-in hunting.

MISSOURI RIVER WILDLIFE UNIT

Ed Weiner, Wildlife Biologist

Wetlands along the Missouri River received little rainfall since early July. By mid August, wetland conditions were generally poor. Spring precipitation was adequate to put some water in oxbow lake areas like **Badger Lake** and **Round Lake**, so some open water will be visible to migratory birds this fall. Pumping is currently underway at **Louisville Bend** and **Tieville Bend Wildlife Areas**. The pump at **Winnebago Bend** is being repaired and should be operational by Sept. 15. On a positive note, the **Missouri River** water level will remain relatively high through October 23rd to allow navigation later in the fall. This will allow pumping to continue later than it has in the past few years, which should improve habitat conditions later in the season. As the water level in the river drops, hunters will need to adjust their hunting strategies to make use of the emerging sandbar habitat. Rains during the past three weeks have improved wetland conditions on all WRP areas in the **Owego Compelx** in Woodbury County. **Browns Lake** and **Snyder Bend** look pretty good, with normal water levels due to the water supplied from Port Neal power plant.

NISHNABOTNA WILDLIFE UNIT

Carl Priebe, Wildlife Biologist

Riverton: Adaptability will be the key word for Riverton duck hunters for the first split of the duck season. Work is still underway to repair to damages from the May flooding, including repairs to the main access road. For the first split of the duck season, vehicle access will be restricted to the north access road, entering the wildlife area two miles north of Riverton, off 330th Avenue. Only the north segment of the three cells in the Riverton walk-in area will be flooded by the first opening. The pump for the Jensen Tract is being repaired, so little or no water will be available on that area for the opening. The main Riverton Area is full, but the majority of the area is open water and there is little emergent vegetation except near the edges. There will not be many areas to hide a large boat blind. It is hoped that both public access and water conditions will be improved by the October 18 duck opener.

Forney Lake: Forney Lake is full. Lotus covers much of the refuge while river bulrush dominates the public hunting area. The water in the public hunting portion of Forney Lake is about 3 feet deep. Although the vegetation looks very dense from the road there are many openings and ducks are using them.

Willow Slough: Willow Slough has good water levels, but the high water during the early summer has resulted in a lot of open water that may not attract many early migrating ducks.

Haynie Slough: This wetland is an old oxbow, about 1 3/4 miles long, that is quite narrow. It currently has good water and appears to be in pretty good shape. Most of the water is 1-3 feet in depth, but there is a ditch running through the center of the slough that may be 4-5 feet deep.

ODESSA WILDLIFE UNIT

Bill Ohde, Wildlife Biologist

Mississippi River: The River was at its normal low level after a summer of flooding until the weekend of September 13-14 when heavy rains caused a spike in its level. Backwaters have relatively poor habitat due to the summer flood and the lack of vegetation. Unless we get heavy fall rains, it will probably return to normal fairly fast and have poor conditions. The exception to this is Pool 19 in the Fort Madison to Keokuk stretch, where the flood didn't have as big an impact and vegetation is still good and should provide good habitat for migrating waterfowl.

Odessa Wildlife Area: The area was flooded for most of the summer and didn't recede to levels allowing annual vegetation growth until August, and then still remained a foot higher than the previous 3 summers. That resulted in greatly reduced vegetation that just amounts to a fringe around the edge of most areas. The floodwaters did recede early enough that buttonbush had a chance to leaf out and appears unaffected by the flood. The lake was held lower than normal for September to allow late germinating moist soil plants a chance to mature and set seed, but we are now beginning a slow steady raise. We will probably maintain slightly lower than normal water levels since the vegetation is shorter this fall, and also to reduce stress on the bottomland hardwoods. The area will be mostly open water with very little vegetation—a big change from the last 3 years. The Lateral Ditch and the channel leading back into Yankee Chute are both posted as 'no wake' areas now. They were supposed to have been dredged by now but flooding

delayed work and it will probably not be completed until next year. Regardless, the no wake rule is in effect.

Cone Marsh: The area was flooded most of the summer and very little vegetation remains except along the edges and bays. Both pools are at or above crest because of the consistent rains. It will certainly remain at crest or above throughout the fall because of the saturated watershed. A drawdown is planned for 2009 if weather permits.

Wiese Slough: This area has a good mix of open water and emergent vegetation, but more open than last year. It also has thick submergent vegetation which will make it tough motoring for conventional outboards. Water level is good but being held slightly lower than last year's high levels to maintain thinning vegetation. It is currently being raised the final 8-10" and will probably be there by the 2nd opener. Habitat conditions are very good.

Cedar Bottoms: More water than normal because of summer flooding and recent rains. Recently constructed floodplain ponds and newly scoured areas are all holding water at present but some will dry up if we don't continue to get rain.

Millrace Flats: Scours and shallow basins are all full because of recent heavy rains. Scours will maintain water throughout the fall but shallow basins will be dependant on additional rains or high water on the Iowa River.

Turtle Bend: Water areas are all full because of recent rains. Oxbow areas will probably maintain good water all fall but shallow basins will be dependant on fall rains or high water on the Iowa River.

Klum Lake: Water level above crest with the normal heavy vegetation with scattered open potholes.

Blackhawk Bottoms: High water level will probably hold well into the fall because of the saturated watershed from recent heavy rains and constant inflow. A record flood in June limited vegetation growth and conditions are more open than normal but still good buttonbush areas providing good habitat.

PRAIRIE LAKES WILDLIFE UNIT

Bryan Hellyer, Wildlife Biologist

Water levels in most of the large marshes in the Unit are somewhat below crest, some as low as a foot due to a lack of rain during the last two months. The amount of emergent vegetation varies from area to area, although most areas have at least a fringe of cattails. Most wetlands will be difficult to access by boat without additional rainfall. Abundant submergent vegetation on some wetlands may make using outboard motors difficult until later October. Most of the small wetlands are dry or nearly dry. Most are walk-in areas, but some are accessible using small

boats or canoes. Because wetland habitat conditions vary across the counties, pre-season scouting is highly recommended.

Rush Lake (Palo Alto County): The water level in Rush Lake was manipulated this past summer and consequently produced an excellent stands emergent and submergent vegetation. Most areas outside the main channel have 18" of water and are packed with smartweed. The current conditions should attract and hold good numbers of local and migrating waterfowl. Initial boat use will be challenging, but will become easier after the first frost.

Dan Green Slough: Dan Green Slough is currently being dewatered this fall in preparation for construction of a new water control structure and pumping system that will vastly improve water quality and water level management capabilities on this area, which in turn should improve future waterfowl hunting. The use of a boat/motor for the remainder of the waterfowl season will not be feasible, but some walk-in hunting opportunities should still be available throughout the season. The process of revegetating this marsh may take 2 growing seasons, therefore waterfowl hunting opportunities will be limited the next couple years.

Ingham-High Complex: Most of the large wetlands are below crest , some as much as a foot low. Emergent vegetation varies from area to area, with most areas having at least a fringe of cattails. Some of these wetlands will be difficult to access by boat unless significant rainfall is received. Most of the smaller wetlands are dry or nearly dry.

4-Mile Lake (Emmet County): 4-Mile Lake has been kept dry for two consecutive years to assist in restoring the health back to this lake so once again it can contain clean water and is of increased value to wildlife and humans. Some channel cleanout and improvements to the existing water control structure, which includes a fish barrier, are slated for this fall, weather dependent. If all goes well this fall the lake will slowly refill next year and should be available for the fall of 2009.

RATHBUN WILDLIFE UNIT

Jeff Telleen, Wildlife Biologist

Rathbun Lake: As of October 10, Rathbun Lake is still almost 14 feet above pool. Forecasted rain may push the lake back higher. Due to extremely high summer water levels, very little food was produced for waterfowl but if lake levels remain high as crop fields are harvested, there will be abundant flooded brush and timber for resting field feeding ducks. Boat ramps at Brown's Slough, Atwell's, Woodpecker, Deadman's Landing, and South Fork are still not useable at this time but may be by the 18th. Ramps at North Colyn, North County Line and Greenville Marsh are useable along with main lake ramps at Bridgeview, Honey Creek and Buck Creek. Hunters should check conditions before the opener.

Sedan Bottoms: Most of the water control structures at Sedan Bottoms are open to allow construction to continue although Buckshot Lake and the wetland by the old town of Sedan are full or near full. Oxbow wetlands are also full.

RED ROCK WILDLIFE UNIT

Chuck Kakac, Wildlife Biologist

As of September 15, the water level in Red Rock Lake was 4 ft. above normal pool. At the DNR's request, the Corps of Engineers, the agency that controls the water level on this reservoir, will keep the water level near normal pool elevation so that work on a DNR boat ramp can be completed this fall. The water level will not be raised as it has during the fall in past years for at least 6 to 8 weeks, if at all. If the water level is at normal pool by September 20, the upper reaches of the reservoir will be largely open water, with large expanses of mud flats and no cover in which to hide a boat or an individual.

SAYLORVILLE WILDLIFE UNIT

Scott Peterson and Ron Munkel, Wildlife Biologists

This report on habitat conditions on selected areas within the Saylorville Wildlife Unit should not take the place of pre-season scouting as habitat and water level conditions can change weekly depending on precipitation and when the first frost occurs.

Errington Marsh (Polk County): Good water exists on most all basins. All areas are walk-in.

Colo Bogs (Story County): Adequate water and excellent habitat conditions exist in the tract located north of new Highway 30 and south of County E-41 (old Lincoln Highway). This pool was partially drawn down during the summer to allow grass to become established on the new dike and now has an excellent variety of emergent vegetation. Pool level has increased 5" since the first week of October. Walk-in hunting only.

The large shallow basin north of County E-41 (old Lincoln Highway) is currently holding adequate water and has excellent habitat. Walk-in hunting only.

Harrier Marsh (Boone County): Larger basins are holding adequate water for shore hunting. Most basins surrounded by or covered by heavy stands of cattails. All are Walk-in only areas.

Saylorville Reservoir (Polk, Dallas and Boone Counties): The flooding during the spring and summer has left traditional waterfowl hunting areas on Saylorville in mud flat conditions with sparse vegetation. Water levels did not return to normal (conservation) pool until mid-August. Japanese millet was aerially seeded on to selected mud flats in the vicinity of Jester Park below the Highway 17 Bridge to provide green browse for waterfowl. It is not expected to mature due to the late planting date. Beginning October 1st, the water level is slowly being raised to a proposed 2' above conservation pool (838.0' msl) and will be closely monitored to arrive at a water level that will provide optimal habitat in conjunction with improving boat access.

Big Creek Lake (Polk County): The upper reaches of the north and west arms of the lake offer the best opportunity for waterfowl hunting. Above the silt dams, very shallow water conditions provide for mostly walk-in hunting or very shallow draft boats. Caution is recommended to waders due to deep mud conditions. The bays and points, especially on the west and north shorelines, offer areas to hunt from boats.

Brushy Creek Lake (Webster County): The upper stretches of this lake have flooded timber with a few islands. Extra long decoy cords may be necessary depending on where you set up with a boat. West arm of lake is popular. Some walk-in hunting opportunities exist along select shorelines.

Guthrie and Greene Counties

Marsh conditions will be much more variable across the Unit this fall. At the present time, marsh vegetation conditions, for the most part, are fair to excellent. High water levels early in the summer affected the development of moist soil plants on some areas. This past week several rainfall events have dramatically changed water levels on many of the marshes in the counties, most are now at crest or near crest. We should be positioned to have adequate water throughout the balance of the waterfowl season.

Bays Branch WMA: The marsh is in a drawdown condition with some sheet-water above and below the road and in the refuge although recent rain has brought the level up temporarily. The boards have been removed since this spring in preparation for construction projects. The County is replacing a bridge and the DNR is piggy backing the construction of a water control structure with it. A boat ramp is also planned for access to the south of the road grade. When the bridge and the sheet-pile structure are complete, boat traffic under the bridge will not be possible. The start date for the projects was delayed about 30 days because large rainfall events brought the marsh to or above crest elevations on several occasions even with the boards removed.

The partial draw-down last year and the draw-down this year, although sporadic, has allowed good to excellent marsh vegetation to develop. The marsh above the road grade has good stands of emergent plants, mostly arrow head and soft-stemmed bulrush, and moist soil plants, a mix of barnyard grass, nut sedge, smart weeds, and beggars-ticks. Below the road grade and in the refuge the vegetation is primarily moist soil plants.

There will be limited hunting opportunity on the marsh this fall. Completion of the construction projects and fall rains will determine whether there is late season hunting opportunity.

Lakin Slough: The water level is at crest or slightly above crest depending on rain events. There is a fringe of cattails around the marsh with a majority of the marsh in an open water condition. There is a fair amount of submerged vegetation that could impair outboard motor operation. There should be adequate water depth for most boat operation.

Snake Creek WMA: – The main marsh is at fall crest or slightly above crest elevation depending on rain events. There is excellent flooded emergent vegetation with open water pockets. The North Slough has excellent emergent vegetation and is about 12” above crest, the result of beaver activity plugging the outlet structure. Additionally, the extended high water

level from heavy summer rains has left open flats around the perimeter of the basin. There are some scattered open water pockets. Expect the water level to reach crest when the beaver plug is removed. The Northwest Slough has an excellent mix of emergent vegetation and moist soil plant growth and is about 5" below crest.

The marsh conditions should be very attractive to waterfowl and should provide some excellent walk-in waterfowl hunting opportunity. Canoes or small marsh boats may be useable on the main marsh. There is no boat ramp.

Goose Lake (Greene Co.): The marsh water level is within 3" of crest. The excellent water level is the result of several large rainfall events in the watershed well into August. The open water area in the south half of the marsh has expanded from last year. There are several newly accessible openings in the western and northern portions of the marsh.

At the current time, larger boats should have easy access to most of the marsh. Expect to encounter a fair amount of submerged vegetation. Boats with mud motors should be able to operate under current conditions. Boats with outboard motors may have some difficulty with submerged vegetation. Additionally, hunters should expect water levels to drop through the fall without regular substantial rainfall events.

Fin Pond WMA: The water level is fair to good. There is a heavy ring of emergent vegetation with scattered stands in the center of the marsh. There should be good walk-in hunting conditions.

Dunbar Slough WMA:

Hoyt Tract Mitigation Wetland – The water level is below crest. It has heavy vegetation with some open water. There should be some walk-in hunting opportunity.

North Refuge – The water level is near to above crest. It is in an open water condition with a narrow fringe of emergent vegetation.

Smith Tract Wetland – The basin is nearly dry. There is a poor stand of moist soil plants. The result of extend high water level in the spring and early summer. The wetland may provide some walk-in hunting opportunity if we receive enough rain to fill or partially fill the basin.

Dunbar Slough – The current water level is about 1.5 inches below crest. The central basin is open water. Good emergent vegetation has developed and expanded around the edges of the marsh. There is also a fair amount of submerged vegetation.

There should be good to excellent walk-in hunting. Under current conditions the marsh is accessible to most boats.

Taylor Wetland Refuge – The current water level is about 3.5” below the desired fall crest. Emergent vegetation has continued to develop. There is an abundance of flooded moist soil food producing plants. The flooded moist soil plants should be very attractive to waterfowl.

Dunbar Slough WPA:

Hunter Tract A Cell – The current water level is about 3” below fall crest. Water levels were well above crest several times during the summer. Because of the frequency of rainfall events during the spring and summer, conditions favorable to producing good stands of moist soil plants never occurred. There should be fair walk-in hunting opportunity. Currently, moderate sized boats or larger may be useable.

Hunter Tract B Cell – The water level is about 12” below the desired fall crest. The marsh has large areas of open water and flooded reeds canary grass. There are some moist soil plants in the upper reaches of the pool that could be flooded if the water level rises. There should be fair to good opportunity for walk-in waterfowl hunting.

Hunter Tract C Cell – The water level is about 16” below the desired fall crest. There is a fair to good stand of moist soil plants in this cell and with adequate rainfall they will be flooded. There should be fair opportunity for walk-in waterfowl hunting.

Hunter Tract D Cell – The water level is about 14” below crest. This cell is primarily open water with some flooded reeds canary grass. This cell should provide some walk-in waterfowl hunting opportunity.

Klocke Tract – This tract has several shallow wetlands that have been to crest on a couple occasions during the summer. Because of the earlier high water, little or no moist soil plant growth occurred in these basins. Currently these basins have varying amounts of water. They have an adequate amount of flooded vegetation to make them attractive to waterfowl and should provide some hunting opportunity.

McCord Pond: The water level is at to slightly above crest because of a beaver dam. There has been considerable emergent vegetation growth with the central basin in a semi-open water condition. Much of the vegetation is flooded making conditions very attractive to waterfowl. The large sagittaria bed in the eastern portion of the marsh is going down resulting in more water showing. The marsh should provide good walk-in waterfowl hunting. Shallow draft boats are useable. Larger boats may have some difficulty.

Willow Wildlife Area: Greene County Conservation Board. The larger wetlands on this area are near crest elevations. Several have excellent flooded moist soil plants. These wetlands may provide good walk-in waterfowl hunting opportunity.

SUGEMA WILDLIFE UNIT

Chuck Steffen, Wildlife Biologist

Water levels in wetlands on the **Fox River Wildlife Area** (WA) and **DeVoss/Foster WA** in Van Buren County and **Hayesville Bend WA** in Keokuk County are at crest or above, but vegetation conditions in these wetlands are fair to poor because of high water levels this past summer. Lake Sugema has plenty of water, but no shoreline vegetation to attract or hold ducks.

UPPER IOWA WILDLIFE UNIT

Terry Haindfield, Wildlife Biologist

Cardinal Marsh in Winneshiek County has very good wetland habitat conditions, with only one segment needing additional water as of October 13.

The **Mississippi River** (Pools 9 & 10) has very good aquatic plant growth after the flooding earlier in the year and then having mudflats exposed this summer. Water levels are normal to below normal as of October 17. Some areas will be hard to get to with boats. A rise in the river's water level during the waterfowl season could result in excellent food and cover for ducks and geese as they arrive.
